

Grant to upgrade emergency generator capacity

by JESSICA GOOLSBY, Staff writer, SoMdNews.com

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced earlier this month that Charlotte Hall Veterans Home will receive a federal grant totaling \$3,765,184 for assistance toward the cost of expanding the facility's emergency power capacity.

The grant was requested because of the current emergency generator's age and inability to provide 100 percent backup power, said Sharon Mattia, director for the veterans home program with the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs.

The existing emergency generator can provide only about a third of the power the veterans home normally uses.

It took about a year to acquire the grant.

"The initial grant application was submitted in March 2011 to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs through the State Home Construction Grant Program," Mattia said.

The State Home Construction Grant Program allows states to apply for grant funding of up to 65 percent of the cost of a project, Mattia said, noting that Charlotte Hall Veterans Home received the 65 percent. Grant funds must be used for new construction or the expansion, remodeling or renovation of existing buildings.

"The remaining 35 percent comes from the state of Maryland, as Charlotte Hall Veterans Home is a state program under the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs," she said.

Mattia said the latest projection for project completion stands at 10 months, and work should

start by early summer. No other grant projects are in the works at this time, she said.

“There’s a lot of underground concrete ducting that has to be done, which isn’t in place at the moment, so those kinds

of things add time to the construction process,” explained Michael Farr, deputy director for the veterans home program. “But this is a big deal. It’s just a great improvement, because when this project is completed we’ll be able to supply full services, whereas right now when we have a power outage we’re only able to supply about 30 percent of our regular services.”

Mattia added, “The safety and well-being of our veterans is of utmost importance. ... Having the peace of mind knowing all facility systems will be 100 percent operational in the event of a power outage when the project is complete is very important.

“My hope is just that we continue to provide excellent care to our veterans and support to their families who have given of themselves to ensure our freedom.”

Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Md.) said in a statement, “Our veterans deserve the best and this funding will make sure that the power doesn’t go out in an emergency situation.”

Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md., 5th) also said in a statement, “I want to thank the Department of Veterans Affairs for recognizing the importance of Charlotte Hall Veterans Home to our local veteran population. ... It is important that the nearly 76,000 veterans in the 5th District, and particularly those who live here at Charlotte Hall, know that the federal government is committed to providing them with quality care and services.”

Charlotte Hall Veterans Home is a program within the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs and is the only veterans home in the state of Maryland. The facility opened in 1985 and is situated on 126 acres, hosting 456 beds and providing a continuum of care from the 168-bed assisted-living unit to a higher level of care in the 288-bed skilled nursing home. Specialized care, for those suffering from Alzheimer’s disease and other related dementias, is provided in two secure 42-bed units.